



International

INDEPENDENCE, EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY.

A photograph of four people smiling. On the left, a man with a beard and a green cap wears a blue and white striped shirt. Next to him, a man in a patterned shirt smiles. On the right, a woman in a bright pink headscarf and a colorful patterned dress smiles. In the bottom right corner, a woman in a green and orange striped sari is partially visible.

CAPACITY BUILDING.

ADD INTERNATIONAL'S APPROACH.
A LEARNING PAPER.

AT OUR CORE: CAPACITY BUILDING.

For over 30 years ADD International has been working in partnership with disability activists to strengthen their organisations, networks and national movements. We call this work 'Capacity Building' and it is one of our key contributions to achieving positive and lasting change for persons with disabilities.

What is Capacity Building?

In the face of hostility and oppression, organisations of disability activists are working to tackle stigma, transform attitudes and create positive, lasting change for persons with disabilities. Capacity Building is the tailored support ADD International provides to empower these activists, and their organisations, to be as effective as possible in making change happen.

Through all our work we strive to achieve 3 main outcomes:

- Greater equality of access to rights for persons with disabilities, including rights to services.
- Greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in all areas of life.
- Greater inclusion of the disability dimension in all aspects of development.

How does Capacity Building make change?

Persons with disability are a community chronically discriminated against. Doing things for them, or to them, is not going to end exclusion - persons with disabilities will remain dependent and marginalised. Through our capacity building model, persons with disabilities are empowered to make change for themselves. At the heart of the work of disability activists and their organisation, is the drive to increase the engagement of persons with disabilities at all levels of society - within families, communities, service providers and powerholders. This increased engagement boosts a positive cycle: persons with disabilities emerge from isolation and, in the process, shift the understanding of those around them, leading to changes in attitude, behaviour and practice.

How do we know it's working?

This paper looks at our capacity building approach sharing key findings from an independent learning review of our model. The review focused on our experience in Cambodia and Bangladesh, and was carried out in 2016 by Anne Garbutt of INTRAC and Brenda Lipson of Framework, two leading consultancy organisations specialising in capacity building. The review confirmed that our approach is working as we thought, that it is effective, and that it contributes to positive change in line with our Theory of Change.

A note on terminology: We use the phrase 'persons with disability', widely used internationally, in accordance with the language of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“ Capacity building is in the DNA of ADD International (...) it is not viewed as a stand-alone, technical intervention but is central to the thinking of how change happens in each context.

Learning review, Anne Garbutt & Brenda Lipson, 2016.



WHY IS CAPACITY BUILDING IMPORTANT?

Persons with disabilities – some of the poorest and most marginalised people in the world – are often the last to benefit from the very programmes designed to reduce poverty and marginalisation.

Unfortunately, too many existing aid programs meant to eliminate poverty do not take into account the unique dangers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Without specific attention and solutions, persons with disabilities have been left behind by mainstream development programmes and remain disproportionately at risk to the life-limiting consequences of chronic poverty.

The 'leave no one behind' agenda of the 2030 Global Goals demands action to reach those who are most marginalised – by disability and other factors - and to ensure that they are included and benefit from development interventions across all sectors.

We know that achieving this will only be possible through the empowerment and agency of persons with disabilities themselves. A strong disability movement is an essential channel for this empowerment process.

Unless consistent action is taken to strengthen disability activists and their organisations, empowering persons with disabilities to become active participants in development, the SDGs' pledge to 'leave no one behind' will prove an empty promise and the goals will be unmet.

WHAT IS GOOD CAPACITY?



The capacity building support needed by organisations of disability activists will vary depending on several factors: whether they are new or established, working at the grassroots, district or national level, on the context of their work, and what they are trying to achieve in the short and long term. So 'good' capacity might look slightly different from one organisation to another at any given time.

However, there are some common characteristics which have been identified by ADD International, and disability activists themselves, as essential for building an effective organisation. These can be categorised within the 3 areas of capacity – to be, to do and to relate.

1. CAPACITY TO 'BE': IDENTITY, LEADERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP, STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS.

Example characteristics of a strong organisation:

Democratic, representative and inclusive – able to reach out to and include persons with disability in their area, especially those most marginalised because of their gender, age, location, type of impairment, poverty; effective and representative leadership and succession; clear mission and objectives; Sustainable, with efficient systems for financial management, human resources and mobilising resources.

2. CAPACITY TO 'DO': ACHIEVING THE ORGANISATION'S MISSION AND OBJECTIVES.

Example characteristics of a strong organisation:

Effective at supporting their members to build knowledge, skills and access opportunities; effective at challenging negative attitudes to disability; effective at representing their members' perspectives through engagement with powerholders at all levels.

3. CAPACITY TO 'RELATE': LINKING EXTERNALLY TO INCREASE THE IMPACT OF THE ORGANISATION'S WORK.

Example characteristics of a strong organisation:

Effective at engaging with external organisations which can help the organisation to carry out its work or increase the impact its work; linked to other organisations within the disability movement, both horizontally and vertically; contributing to the collective 'voice' of persons with disabilities at local and national level.

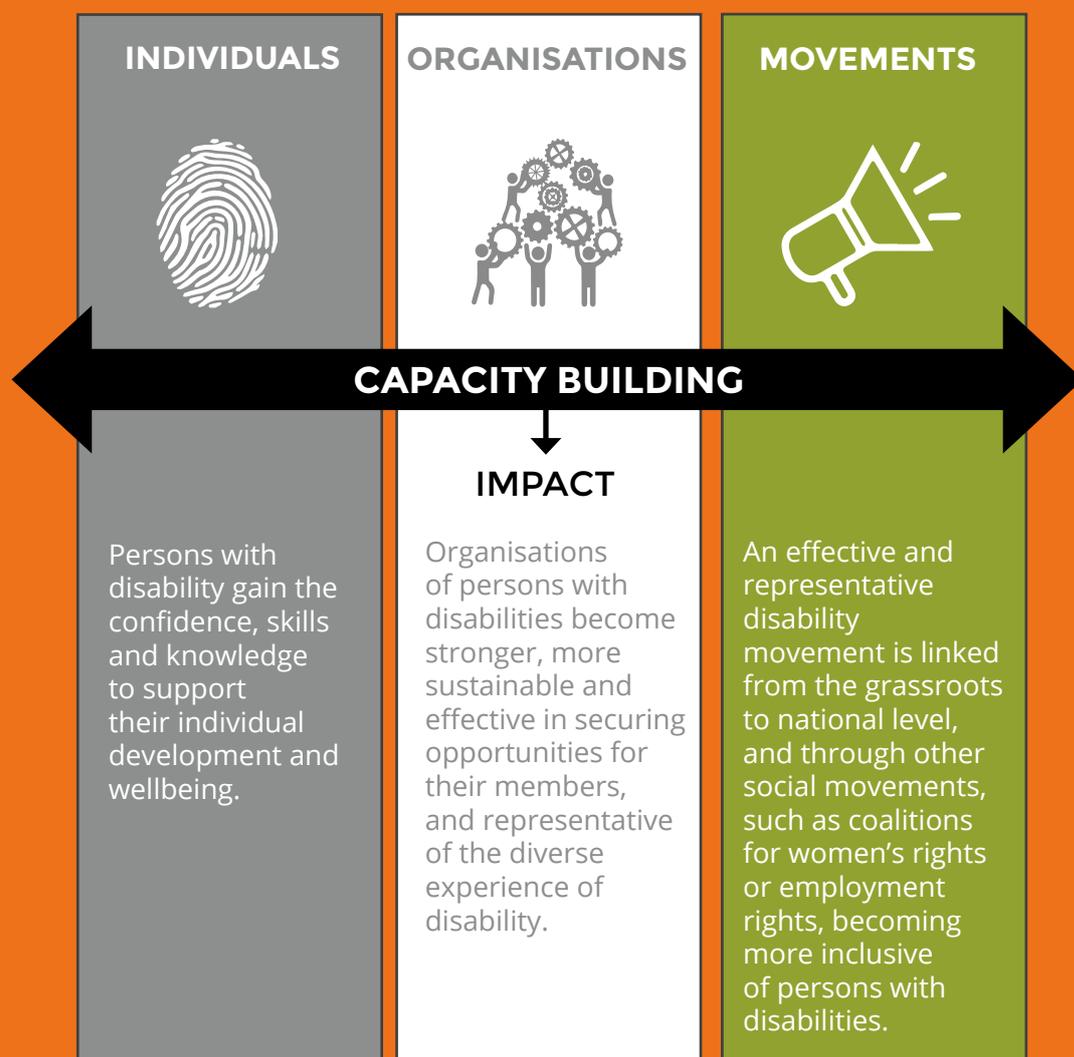
HOW DOES ADD INTERNATIONAL BUILD CAPACITY?

FROM THE GRASSROOTS TO THE CORRIDORS OF POWER.

We know that, in order to tackle the multi-dimensions of disability exclusion, we need to support the disability movement from the local to the global level. That's why our unique capacity building approach has impact at three different levels - individuals, organisations and movements. We facilitate strong linkages vertically and horizontally, building connections and collaborations from the grassroots to power-holders.

ADD International's main point of entry is **organisational capacity**. In this way we help organisations of disability activists build the capacity of their individual members. This approach also strengthens the capacity of the disability movement as a whole to engage with other civil society organisations, government decision makers and service providers at all levels, and to represent the diverse voice and concerns of persons with disabilities.

We also provide capacity building support to other NGOs (international and national) on disability awareness and inclusive approaches, but this paper focuses specifically on our work with the disability movement.



HOW DOES ADD INTERNATIONAL BUILD CAPACITY?



Capacity building is a shared journey between ADD International and organisations of disability activists, where the needs and strengths of the travellers are constantly evolving, just as the landscape is also changing around us.

At any one time we are working in different ways with our partners: with some we collaborate on implementing specific projects funded by donors, while with others we may provide capacity building support as we explore new areas of work and develop new projects. We also maintain links with a number of groups who don't have a formal funding agreement with us, but who benefit from our advice, from participation in our workshops and events, and from the links with other organisations which we can facilitate.

BUILDING FROM THE GRASSROOTS UP.

ADD International has a long history of working at grassroots level to help persons with disabilities to come together and form self-help groups. We then help these groups to link up and form disabled people organisations. We have developed 'models of working' which set out the steps involved in this process, and our capacity building role at each stage. These models are specific to the local context but they have similar components across all programmes, including: outreach and identification of persons with disabilities; facilitation of initial meetings; formalisation through registration and election of leaders; establishing and strengthening skills and systems for organisational management and carrying out activities; establishing links with district level or umbrella organisations.

Much of our capacity building work is now done with organisations of disability activists who are already established. We agree a package of support to help them become even more effective, move into new areas of work and strengthen their links to the wider disability movement.

SPECIALISED STAFF.

The skills and experience of ADD International's programme teams form an essential element of our capacity building approach: we ensure that all our staff develop a solid understanding of social and rights based approaches to disability and a deep personal commitment to inclusion. Many of our staff have a lived experience of disability themselves and this can bring a level of empathy and insight which strengthens the capacity building process.

Our capacity building interventions are also supported by ADD International's other core areas of activity: learning, influencing and leveraging support. Together, these four areas of activity overlap and support one another to bring about lasting impact: for example, reflection and learning is a core part of the capacity building process, while influencing activities are meshed with the capacity building across all our programmes.

Our capacity building with individual partner organisations will depend on the stage of their evolution, what they are trying to achieve and the challenges and opportunities presented by the context they are working within. But our package of support will usually combine inputs across the following areas:



ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING.

Capacity building begins as a conversation between ADD International and disability activists. They tell us the change they want to make and what they need to make it happen. We work together to assess their capacity in the context of what they want to achieve, so that we can respond to their specific needs and priorities. Based on this assessment we develop specific capacity building plans against which we collectively review progress and challenges as we move forward.



ACCOMPANIMENT.

One of the most effective ways capacity is built is through 'learning by doing'. We provide our partners with advice and coaching at key points throughout the project cycle. Accompaniment can include joint delivery of some project elements, such as training, review workshops, and external meetings and this close relationship also allows us to identify and respond to specific needs as they emerge.



TECHNICAL INPUTS.

We help disability activists build the knowledge and skills they need to take their organisations forward. This can include providing training on disability rights, leadership training, basic law, gender awareness training and financial management. Where relevant, we may also facilitate training or information relevant to thematic projects such as HIV/AIDS, electoral rights or gender based violence. We sometimes 'multiply' the impact of our technical support through training of trainers within the disability movement. This approach also builds capacity and sustainability in the long term.



STRATEGIC RESOURCES.

We sometimes provide organisations of disability activists with strategic funding to cover core costs such as rent, transport, meeting and staff costs. Money is provided for a limited period while the organisation develops strategies for meeting these costs in a sustainable way. This might include building core costs recovery into funded projects, fee income from increased number of members, or developing income generating activities which bring regular income to the organisation. ADD International also funds organisations to carry out strategic one-off activities which will contribute to strengthening capacity, such as participation in conferences or learning visits to other organisations.



BROKERING LINKS.

We help organisations of disability activists to make strategic external links at every stage of the capacity building process. When a self-help group or organisation is setting up, it is important to establish good links with local authorities and community leaders. We help organisations identify and engage with power-holders who can help them to achieve their objectives, such as service providers (health, education, credit, legal advice), policymakers, and NGOs that can provide inputs or collaborate on joint projects. In order to strengthen the overall disability movement we also help partners to establish and nurture links across the movement, both horizontally (such as peer learning and exchange visits) and vertically (links with umbrella groups at district, national and international level).

IS IT WORKING?

The external review of our capacity building approach, carried out in Bangladesh and Cambodia, produced the following key findings:

Capacity building runs through all ADD International's work. Capacity Building is in the 'DNA' of ADD International in both countries – it is not viewed as a stand-alone, technical intervention but is central to the thinking of how change happens in each context.

Persons with disabilities benefit from ADD International's capacity building. Capacity building can be seen to have contributed to real improvements in the lives of individual persons with disabilities, as well as contributing to achieving more inclusive society/development processes benefiting all persons with disabilities in both countries. This reaffirms the Theory of Change.

ADD International's capacity building delivers sustainable change. The capacity building outcomes are seen to have been sustainable, with organisations continuing to thrive many years after our initial, intense engagement.

IN THEIR WORDS.



There are a lot of myths towards people with albinism in Uganda. People believe that it's a punishment from God, or that if you get the body part of someone with albinism, such as a tooth, nail or tongue, it will bring you wealth.

People with albinism are surrounded by fear. We have been hidden away for a long time; ashamed and scared to speak in public because of these misconceptions.

I got together with a few other people with albinism; we wanted to try and change things but we didn't have any idea of what we could do. We connected with ADD International who helped us to build our capacity, understand our rights and what we need to do to change society.

I have received many different trainings, such as how to lobby effectively and how to influence policy makers to create policies that will protect people with albinism. We recently launched a campaign to get the government to waive taxes on sun protection cream for people with albinism. Sun cream is very expensive and our skins make us very susceptible to cancer.

Through ADD International we are helping thousands of people living with albinism in Uganda.

PETER OGIK.

DISABILITY ACTIVIST FROM UGANDA.



In Bangladesh to be disabled and a woman is a vicious combination. Women are like the broom in the house; the cheapest household appliance.

I became disabled when I was six months old and fell ill with Polio. In our village people thought disability was a curse incurred by an earlier generation's wrongdoing. I believed them. I used to think that maybe my grandpa must have done something wrong. I kept myself in a shell. The question of my rights was a far cry away.

Through ADD International I received training to build my confidence and skills. ADD International is a milepost in fighting for the rights of disabled people in Bangladesh. Maybe one day it won't be here anymore but it will not take away its teachings and those teachings will help us throughout our lives.

I am now a disability activist and President of my district's Women's Council. Last year, the Ministry of Women's Affairs awarded me a prize for my work. But I still see injustice happening every day.

Recently a disabled woman was raped. The villagers tried to cover it up and the girl was forced out of her home. I took the girl in and we filed a report against the perpetrator.

Before we formed our Women's Council, disabled people weren't allowed in the police station. Now, thanks to our work, they give us chairs to sit on.

When we see a disabled woman in danger, we feel that we ourselves are in danger. It could also happen to me. If we do not act to solve our problems then the negative propaganda in our society about disabled women will remain intact.

I dream of a society where there will be no word like 'disabled.' Our work will be successful when all disabled people have the identity of a human being.

SABINA YASMIN.
DISABILITY ACTIVIST FROM BANGLADESH.



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Discrimination is endemic in the countries where we work and shifting deeply entrenched social stigma does not happen overnight.

That's why we build long term relationships with organisations of disability activists to make sure skills and learning are deeply embedded. Part of being effective in our role as a capacity building partner is understanding our impact. The independent review of our work highlighted some of the key challenges for our work:

1. DEPENDENCY.

One of the main dangers of establishing capacity building relationships with partners, particularly where we contribute to core costs, can be creating dependency. A partnership where ADD International is seen principally as a 'donor' reduces the scope for joint learning.

Our Response: To tackle this we will improve our joint assessment and planning with partners so that we can clarify exactly what we are trying to achieve, over what period, and include how to ensure future financial sustainability in to the capacity building 'package'.

2. CAPACITY COSTS V PROJECT FUNDING.

Recent changes in the funding environment have led to a shift in ADD International's work from specific capacity building interventions to thematically focused projects. These allow us to help organisations of disability activists to strengthen their capacity while delivering projects which benefit their members and contribute to systemic change – 'learning by doing'. However, the review highlighted the challenges associated with this approach:

- There is a danger that only 'stronger' organisations are included in thematic projects, as donor requirements place the existing capacity 'bar' at a relatively high level.
- There may be pressure to prioritise project management capacities over some of the other 'softer' capacities in the 'to be/to relate' dimensions.
- There is a danger that the focus on rights may be lost as activists shift their role from rights advocates to service providers.

Our Response: We need to monitor these shifts and address them in the way that we develop projects, and by providing donors with evidence of the importance of rights based approaches.

3. EVALUATION TOOLS.

The review highlighted the limitations of the 'Five Core Capabilities' tool we had been using to monitor and evaluate our capacity building work. The tool is based on abstract concepts which are hard to communicate to our partners and they've struggled to relate the tool to their day to day experience. It also did not provide indicators which would allow us to identify specific changes needed and to monitor progress against agreed action plans.

Our Response: We have developed a 'Three Circles Tool' which provides a 'menu' of indicators within 3 areas of capacity (to be, to do and to relate), which our partners can use selectively depending on the stage of their evolution. As well as assessing capacity, the tool identifies annual priorities and specific inputs to be provided by ADD International, with progress against these plans assessed each year. This is also supported by other tools which we have developed to support capacity including a Gender Assessment Tool.

WHAT NEXT?

There has been a chronic neglect of disability as a development issue and it is profoundly out of kilter with the reality many persons with disability face.

Millions of disabled people are still condemned to a life of poverty and exclusion.

The global goals have promised to 'leave no-one behind'; if that is to be fully realised then ADD International, and our capacity building support of disability activists, is more critical than ever. The world is full of complex crises which cannot be resolved overnight. For the causes we care about, and are committed to, it will be a life-long, multi-generational journey for change. But change can, and does, come. We see disability activists make it every day. Right now, organisations of disability activists in Africa and Asia are working to fight discrimination and ensure every disabled person gets a fighting chance at living their best life. As the development sector moves into implementing the global goals we renew our commitment to be excellent capacity builders to the global disability movement. We intend to do this by:

- Further testing, strengthening and adapting our capacity building model in different contexts
- Honing our tools for assessment, planning and evaluating capacity building
- Strengthening our internal capacity to respond to the capacity building needs of our partners
- Focusing more on the role of reflection and learning in the capacity building process, within and between organisations of activists and ADD International

We believe everyone should be able to make the best of the life they are born into. That's why we are a proud and unswerving ally to disability activists and their movement for liberation. Their courage and determination deserves the world's attention and resources. If the campaign for global disability equality inspires and moves you, then we hope you will join us.

Let's start a conversation today.

Emma Cain,
Head of Learning & Accountability.
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কোন স্থপ্তি ছাড়াই হোক প্রতিবন্ধীদের কষ্টস্বর



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২৭-২৮ নভেম্বর ২০০৪

The following documents are available on our website www.add.org.uk

- Full reports of the Capacity Building Review: Bangladesh/Cambodia/ Cross-case Report
- ADD International's Theory of Change
- How do we add value?
- MEL tools developed by ADD International to support our capacity building work: Three Circles Tool/Gender Assessment Tool

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